

Student-Based Recommendation on Reforming Secondary Education in Kentucky

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STUDENTS FEEL UNPREPARED FOR THE NEXT STEP

CATS

- “Teaching to the test” results in the overemphasis of relatively insignificant material and the marginalization of important topics in the high school curriculum.
- CATS preparation and scrimmaging tends to take away from valuable class time.
- The material covered by the CATS test is not always useful to students and is often not on par with what will be expected at the next level.
- **Structuring the CATS test more like the SAT or ACT would benefit Kentucky’s students by promoting a higher level of learning and familiarizing them with an important test format.**
- **Student incentives, such as KEES money for high-scoring students, would remove some of the burden from high schools.**

COUNSELORS/ ADVISORS

- Commonly, high school guidance counselors are overextended and cannot devote the attention that is necessary to help students prepare for the next step.
- Some students feel “unnoticed” by their counselors, making those counselors inaccessible to students who may need guidance more than anyone.
- **Because finding guidance counselors is becoming an increasingly difficult task, schools should utilize numerous advisors who will be able to devote time and attention to students.**
- **Teachers also need to be brought into the mix. By familiarizing themselves with the complexities of college applications etc., teachers will be able to be even more valuable resources to their students.**

ACCESS TO HIGH-LEVEL CLASSES

- Many students who have the drive to challenge themselves with high-level courses are unable to do so because of nonexistent programs and/or ineffective and inflexible scheduling.
- **Students need more options in terms of college credit and foreign language courses. These courses should be offered in an effective classroom environment.**
- Scheduling discrepancies are often insurmountable hurdles for students. Many have wanted to take high level courses but could not because of unrefined scheduling at their schools.
- **Students almost invariably supported block schedules similar to North Oldham’s which employs five classes each semester, for a total of ten classes per year. This is successful because North measures performance against standards, awarding credit for performance, not seat-time.**

- **Classes in high demand should be offered in more than one block, to suit the needs of every student. Independent studies should not be left out of the question, further enabling every student to build the transcript he or she wants.**

COLLEGE-BASED WRITING

- Many college-bound students are not being exposed to the styles of writing that they'll encounter after high school.
- **While it would be dangerous to hold all students to high standards in all types of writing, it would be helpful for college-bound students if the writing portfolio were refined and personalized to include more relevant styles of writing like essays and research papers.**

PERSONALIZED EDUCATION

ELECTIVES

- Some students are satisfied with the traditional structure of high school and, given the opportunity to do so, would like to spend their four years developing impressive transcripts with a variety of classes.
- **Kentucky must ensure that each school offers a breadth of elective options that include in-depth courses. These courses should expand on ideas in both the related arts and core-subject curricula.**

SENIOR PROJECTS, INTERNSHIPS, ETC.

- Many other students in Kentucky were excited by the potential of moving high school learning away from the traditional classroom to real-world environments via senior projects, internships, co-op opportunities, and dual-credit courses among other things.
- Senior projects should provide students with the opportunity to explore an area of interest in any way that is of value. The projects must, of course, be backed by educational value, but flexibility is absolutely key to their success.
- **Senior projects and internships are great examples of how to ensure that students will be passionate about their studies. The idea is to give as many students as many opportunities as possible.**

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLANS

- Students are looking for a roadmap to the next step.
- **Individual Learning Plans should be implemented as an effective tool for students and counselors to ensure that every student receives a personalized education that is best-suited to their individual needs.**
- **Plans will have to be comprehensive, charting a course that brings in everything from classes to extracurricular activities to the writing portfolio.**
- **The Plans should be the result of collaboration between a student and his or her advisor, with whom they have a meaningful relationship.**

CORE REQUIREMENTS

- Obviously, schools must still provide students with well-rounded core requirements, and students responded well to focusing on core requirements in the first two years of high school.

- Students were cautionary that, if put into play, such a system should be very flexible. They agreed with the state that time – not learning – should be the variable. This even means that students who are ready to move on early should be able to do so.
- **While there is no set way of doing this, every high school should implement a system of core requirements that will ensure the mastery of important subjects by all of Kentucky's students.**

STUDENT-FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS

- Students want personable and visible administrators who truly stand for the students in their school. This is important in making students feel like a valued aspect of the school.
- Students also are looking for teachers who are able to relate to their students and show that they care. These teachers are able to make students feel good about being in school and about learning.
- **Kentucky needs to do everything it can to find those teachers and those administrators who will be devoted to providing students with the best high school experience.**

THE MIDDLE TO HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION

- Students thought that transitions between middle and high school were considerably lacking. Some felt that the process of the adjustment was even hindering to their academic performance.
- **Deliberate and effective transitions must be created between the middle schools and the high schools in every county throughout Kentucky.**

CONTINUING CURRICULUM

- **Material covered in the freshmen year of high school should be a direct continuation of the concepts learned in middle school. New concepts should be introduced only when students have the background needed to understand.**
- **Middle and high school curricula must be carefully compared to ensure that this will be the case.**

THE CAMPUS CONCEPT

- **A middle and high school in close proximity that have a common identity and work together to see every student through to the end are especially indicative of a strong transition into the high school years.**
- **It's important for schools to foster connections between middle and high school students. Mentor programs are especially effective in creating meaningful relationships between students of different ages, something that is empowering to younger students.**
- **The common school identity generates support for the entire campus throughout the community. This community support creates an environment in which students feel valued and therefore, desire to stay in school.**